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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N.A. TAGS: KN, MORG, MPOL

SUBJECT:NORTH KOREA: POLITICAL PROBLEMS WITH THE MILITARY

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF INR REPORT NO. 560, DATED
AUGUST 16, 1976.

2. BEGIN SUMMARY. RECENT UNUSUAL CHANGE INVOLVING MILI-
TARY LEADERS IN THE KOREAN WORKERS PARTY (KWP) SUGGESTS
THAT KIM IL-SONG IS ENGAGED IN ANOTHER PERIODIC EFFORT TO
STRENGTHEN PARTY CONTROL OF THE KOREAN PEOPLES ARMY (KPA).
THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN, WHICH HAS SURFACED IN THE PROPAGANDA
AS A DEBATE OF "WEAPONS VERSUS MEN," IS APPARENTLY INTENDED
BOTH TO UPGRADE THE ROLE OF GUERRILLA WARFARE AND REVOLU-
TIONARY POLITICAL TACTICS IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TO GIVE
KIM A TOOL WITH WHICH TO ATTACK FACTIONAL OPPONENTS.

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3. THE CAMPAIGN IS NOT INTENDED TO ABANDON PRIMARY RELIANCE--FOR BOTH NATIONAL DEFENSE AND POSSIBLE FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH--ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AND THE REGULAR ARMY. NONETHELESS, IT REFLECTS KIM'S IMPATIENCE WITH THE TENDENCY OF THE KPA TO DOWNGRADE THE PEOPLES MILITIA AND TO SHUN THE DIFFICULT WORK OF BUILDING AGENT NETWORKS IN THE SOUTH. IT MAY ALSO REFLECT KIM'S INTENT TO RID THE LEADERSHIP OF

MEN WHO MIGHT BE INCLINED TO OPPOSE HIS SON'S SUCCESSION TO POWER. END SUMMARY

4. THE "WEAPONS VERSUS MEN" ISSUE:

5. DEBATE OF THE "WEAPONS VERSUS MEN" ISSUE IS NOT NEW IN NORTH KOREA, BUT IT HAS BEEN GIVEN PARTICULAR ATTENTION DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS AND SEEMS SINCE LATE 1975 TO HAVE LAID THE GROUND FOR A PARTIAL PURGE OF MILITARY AND SECURITY OFFICIALS. THE PROPAGANDA--INCLUDING ARMY DAY SPEECHES AND ARTICLES IN KULLOJA, THE THEORETICAL JOURNAL OF THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE--HAS ARGUED THAT THE DECISIVE FACTOR IN MILITARY OPERATIONS IS NOT "TECHNIQUE," IT IS "MAN." THE VALUE PLACED ON MAN IN CONTRAST TO WEAPONS, THESE MESSAGES CONTINUE, DISTINGUISHES A "REVOLUTIONARY" STAND FROM A "REACTIONARY" AND "OPPORTUNISTIC" ONE. (THIS IS NOT UNLIKE THE "RED VERSUS EXPERT" DEBATE IN CHINA.)

6. KIM'S OPPONENTS HAVE BEEN BRANDED "COMMUNIST OPPORTUNISTS," "COMMUNIST ADVENTURISTS," AND "FACTIONAL FLUNKIES," AND THEY ARE BEING ACCUSED OF HAVING "VICIOUSLY PLOTTED, EACH WITH HIS OWN ULTERIOR MOTIVE, TO RUIN THE KOREAN REVOLUTION, ROOT AND BRANCH." THEY APPARENTLY ARE SUSPECTED NOT ONLY OF INSUFFICIENT ENTHUSIASM FOR KIM'S POLICIES BUT ALSO OF COUNTERMANDING PARTY ORDERS. THEIR ALLEGED "CRIMES" INCLUDE:

(A)--LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF GUERRILLA WARFARE;

(B)--OPPOSITION TO THE CONCEPT OF TOTAL MOBILIZATION, AND DOWNGRADING OF THE ROLE OF THE WORKERS-PEASANTS RED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MILITIA; AND

(C)--RELUCTANCE TO PUSH FORWARD WITH THE PAINSTAKING, AND SO FAR LARGELY UNPRODUCTIVE, WORK OF BUILDING AGENT NETWORKS IN THE SOUTH.

7. THIS BILL OF PARTICULARS CLOSELY PARALLELS THE CHARGES THAT KIM REPORTEDLY LEVELED AT THE TOP MILITARY OFFICERS HE

PURGED IN 1968. THE PROBLEMS ARE PERSISTENT, REFLECTING INSTITUTIONALIZED CONFLICT BETWEEN A GENERATION THAT CAME TO PROMINENCE THROUGH ITS GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES AND YOUNGER, BUREAUCRATIZED CAREER OFFICERS WHOSE OUTLOOK HAS BEEN MOLDED BY DEPENDENCE ON SOVIET ARMS AND CONVENTIONAL WARFARE TECHNIQUES.

8. IT IS NOT CLEAR IF A WORSENING OF THIS CONFLICT UNDERLIES RECENT ATTEMPTS BY KIM AND THE RULING PARTY TO REASSERT INFLUENCE OVER THE MILITARY. GIVEN THE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS FACING KIM, HIS CAMPAIGN MAY ONLY BE A REFLECTION OF HIS SPECIAL SENSITIVITIES AT THIS TIME.

(A)--GLORIFYING THE ROLE OF "MEN" AND MINIMIZING THAT OF "WEAPONS" IS COMMON IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIP. PRESENTLY, NORTH KOREA'S FOREIGN TRADE PROGRAM IS IN RUINS, ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN BEHIND SCHEDULE, AND ITS RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW--THE KEY SOURCE OF FINANCIAL AND MILITARY AID--COOL.

(B)--SOUTH KOREA'S POLITICAL FABRIC HAS PROVED STRONGER THAN PYONGYANG HAD ANTICIPATED, AND IT IS PROBABLY NOW APPARENT THAT INTENSIFIED AGENT ACTIVITIES WILL BE NEEDED IF NORTH KOREA HOPES TO BUILD A MASS BASE OF SUPPORT FOR REUNIFICATION ON ITS OWN TERMS.

(C)--OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE, KIM IS PREPARING FOR A POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL SUCCESSION BY HIS SON, KIM CHONG-IL, THE FIRST FAMILY SUCCESSION EVER ATTEMPTED IN A COMMUNIST STATE. HE IS UNDOUBTEDLY SENSITIVE ABOUT ANY SIGNS OF DISLOYALTY IN THE ARMY, THE KEY INTEREST GROUP THAT COULD THREATEN HIS PLANS.

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9. THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS:

10. APART FROM THE APPEARANCE OF THE "WEAPONS VERSUS MEN" DEBATE IN THE MEDIA, KIM'S FIRST DISCERNIBLE MOVE TO STRENGTHEN HIS AUTHORITY OCCURRED IN SEPTEMBER 1975. AT THAT TIME, YIM CHUN-CHU REPLACED KIM CHUNG-NIN AS HEAD OF THE PARTY'S LIAISON BUREAU, THE ORGAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NORTH KOREAN PROGRAM OF POLITICAL AND SUBVERSIVE ACTION TARGETED AGAINST SOUTH KOREA. A MONTH LATER, YU CHANG-SIK, DEPUTY OF THE LIAISON BUREAU AND A RELATIVELY YOUNG OFFICIAL WHO HAD SEEMED TO BE ONE OF THE KWP'S FASTEST RISING STARS, WAS REMOVED. YU HAD BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH BOTH THE COVERT WORK OF THE LIAISON BUREAU AND THE OVERT DEALINGS OF THE NOW MORIBUND NORTH-SOUTH COORDINATING COMMITTEE, WHICH HAD BEEN CREATED IN 1972 TO EXPLORE

AVENUES FOR POLITICAL INTERCHANGE.

11. FOLLOWING A QUIET WINTER, THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS APPARENTLY REACHED A PEAK THIS SPRING AT A SECRET PLENUM OF THE KWP CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WHICH WAS CONVENED SOME TIME PRIOR TO THE SUPREME PEOPLES ASSEMBLY (SPA) SESSION OF APRIL 27.

KIM IL-SONG PROBABLY USED THIS MEETING--ONLY THE SECOND UNANNOUNCED CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM OF 12 HELD DURING THE PAST SIX YEARS--TO DENOUNCE HIS FACTIONAL OPPONENTS.

12. PERSONNEL CHANGES THAT BECAME EVIDENT AT THE APRIL SPA SESSION, AFTER APPARENTLY HAVING BEEN DECIDED AT THE UNANNOUNCED PARTY PLENUM, INCLUDED THE PROMOTION TO POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP OF:

(A)--O PAEK-YONG, A FULL GENERAL WHO IS BELIEVED TO BE THE OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF THE PEOPLES MILITIA, AND

(B)--COLONEL GENERAL KIM CHOL-MAN, THE FIRST DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF IN THE KPA.

THIS PROMOTION OF KIM CHOL-MAN, ON THE HEELS OF HIS HAVING BECOME IN FEBRUARY 1976 THE ONLY DEPUTY EVER CHOSEN TO DELIVER THE ANNUAL ARMY DAY ADDRESS, SUGGESTED THAT HE MIGHT SOON MOVE INTO THE CHIEF OF STAFF POST. PYONGYANG LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAS SINCE NAMED FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF O CHIN-U TO THE DEFENSE MINISTRY JOB, BUT KIM CHOL-MAN HAS SO FAR NOT MOVED UP; THE KPA CHIEF POSITION APPARENTLY REMAINS UNFILLED.

13. ALTHOUGH A PURGE ON THE DIMENSIONS OF THE 1968 HOUSE-CLEANING IS NOT YET APPARENT IN THE KWP POLITICAL COMMITTEE, KIM IL-SONG IS, AT A MINIMUM, PROBABLY UNDERTAKING A SIGNIFICANT SHUFFLE OF ARMY OFFICERS AT LOWER LEVELS. A KULLOJA ARTICLE, WRITTEN THIS PAST MARCH BY O PAEK-YONG, SEEMS DESIGNED, IN PART, TO SET THE STAGE FOR A PURGE. SPEAKING OF KIM'S OPPONENTS IN THE ALLEGORICAL TERMS OF A CRISIS IN THE EARLY 1930S, IT NOTES THAT "IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO CONSOLIDATE A SOLID BASE FOR THE KOREAN REVOLUTION WITHOUT ELIMINATING THE RECKLESS MANEUVERS OF THE KNAVES" AND THAT THE "EXISTING SITUATION POSED IT AS A PRESSING QUESTION TO CRUSH THE VICIOUS MACHINATIONS OF THE ENEMIES WITHIN AND WITHOUT."

14. THE POLICY ADJUSTMENTS:

15. IN ADDITION TO PERSONNEL ADJUSTMENTS, KIM IL-SONG IS

TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF INADEQUATE PARTY CONTROL OVER MILITARY PRIORITIES VIA:

(A)--A PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, PART OF WHICH MAY BE TIED TO THE THEME "PRODUCE, WORK AND LIVE IN THE STYLE OF THE ANTI-JAPANESE GUERRILLAS," AND

(B)--INCREASED POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION FOR THE ARMY.

THE O PAEK-YONG ARTICLE IN KULLOJA SEEMS TO HINT AT MEASURES THAT MAY BE TAKEN TO REMEDY PAST LAPSES IN PURSUING REUNIFICATION GOALS. THESE INCLUDE:

(A)--UPGRADING THE WORK OF MASS POLITICAL MOVEMENTS. THIS MAY BE REFLECTED IN INCREASED VISIBILITY FOR THE DEMOCRATIC FRONT FOR THE REUNIFICATION OF THE FATHERLAND AND INCREASED PROPAGANDA BROADCASTING BY THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY FOR REUNIFICATION, WHICH PYONGYANG CLAIMS OPERATES CLANDESTINELY IN THE SOUTH.

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(B)--UPGRADING THE WORK OF INFILTRATION AGENTS IN THE SOUTH TO ESTABLISH OPERATIONS BASES AND CLANDESTINE LIAISON POINTS, PARTICULARLY "TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE NATURAL GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF WOODED REGIONS."

16. THERE IS NO SUGGESTION IN THE PROPAGANDA THAT PYONGYANG EXPECTS EASY OR EARLY SUCCESSES IN INFILTRATION OF THE SOUTH, AND IT IS LIKELY THAT KIM WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS STEADILY FOR GREATER EFFORTS IN THIS FIELD. KISSINGER

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